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Our Little Secrets

A Dime's Worth of Difference

By Alexander Cockburn

Ahoy there, CounterPunchers! Even as I write, a semi is thundering down Interstate 5, hauling its explosive cargo to CounterPunch HQ here in Petrolia. The cargo? Dime's Worth of Difference, Beyond the Lesser of Two Evils, a set of pungent and polemical essays about the twin monsters of the American political landscape, the Democratic and Republican parties.

This the election-year book no CounterPuncher will want to be without: descriptions of the stew of corruption on Capitol Hill, worthy of the pen of Suetonius; reminders of what the Clinton years really wrought; a wonderful tragic-comic history by Bruce Anderson of the political landscape in the heart of the Emerald Triangle on California's north coast. Essays by your favorite CounterPuncher writers, Kevin Gray, JoAnn Wypijewski, Brandy Baker, Steve Perry, Michael Donnelly. A masterly overview of the shape of the American Empire after four years of Bush. Would Kerry be as satisfactorily ham-handed? Here's a slice from Kolko, one of our greatest historians:

"the United States will be more prudent, and the world will be far safer, only if it is constrained by a lack of allies and isolated. And that is happening …. Inadvertently, the Bush Administration has begun to destroy an alliance system that for the world's peace should have been abolished long ago. The Democrats are far less likely to continue that process ... As dangerous as he is, Bush's reelection is much more likely to produce the continued destruction of the alliance system that is so crucial to American power in

(**OLS** *continued on page 2)*

What Kerry Would Do; What Nader Should Do

By ROBIN BLACKBURN

London.

We should all have US citizen ship, like subjects of the Ro man empire after Caracalla. If the rest of the world had a vote Bush would be doomed and Ralph Nader might be the favourite. As it is, we are stuck with contenders who both promise a prolongation of the imperial mission and the war in Iraq.

The occupation has been a disaster. Which candidate might be brought, however reluctantly, to accept full withdrawal? The United States has already suffered political defeat in Iraq but it cannot be defeated militarily, any more than it was in Vietnam, or than France was in Algeria. How long will it take before the imperative of withdrawal is recognised?

Both Bush and Kerry talk of staying until the job is done and of looking forward to the day when they can hand over to the Iraqi authorities, with or without a role for the 'international community'. But in practice neither man, if elected, will be prepared for the only action that would have real legitimacy, namely an unconditional withdrawal. They cannot see that any authority chosen by the occupiers will have no legitimacy and that an elected government will insist that the occupiers leave, handing back control of all borders, bases, communications and oil fields.

Many in Iraq may yearn for an end to jihadi mayhem as well as occupation, but they know the two go together and that only a government representing the substantial majority of Iraqis could hope to prevail. Moreover even such a government, to establish credibility, would need to annul the alienation of Iraqi national assets, to cancel all arrangements with foreign contractors like Halliburton, and to claim full control of all oil revenues and production or transport facilities. An Iraqi government led by Sistani and Al Sadr would discredit itself quite quickly if it failed to take such actions and would render itself vulnerable to attack.

Even after the formal handover of 'sovereignty' the US remains in full occupation, having spent about $3.2 billion in oil revenues constructing a chain of military bases. The US embassy in Bagdad is formidable and huge, with projects for fortress-like consular offices in Mosul, Kirkuk, Hilla and Basra, suggesting a divide-and-rule strategy. These emplacements will give an illusion of invulnerability.

For any US president to give the order to withdraw – 'cut and run' – will be extraordinarily difficult (though cutting and running was a manoeuver which countless times preserved Britain's Royal Navy from disaster). However wrapped up, withdrawal would represent not just a local defeat but a dangerous precedent and an element of humiliation. They will instead prolong the agony by seeking to impose solutions, relying on military might and a thin line of hand-picked Iraqis and dogged allies. But, as resistance continues and the coalition shrivels, which man would be the first to recognise that a continuing US presence was part of the problem, not the solution? Would John Kerry bow to the inevitable more readily than the man who launched the war and presided over the occupation? Kerry voted for the war but could disown both its disastrous results and the false intelligence on which it was based. Surely a vote for Kerry might somewhat increase the chances of eventual US withdrawal and, at the very least, be a very public rebuff for the main culprit?

Given the intense scrutiny to which

(**Blackburn** *continued on page 4)*

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(**OLS** *continued from page 1)*
the long run…."

All those election-year issues – judicial appointments, third party interventions, evils lesser and larger – are excavated with wit and precision, by the CounterPunch stable, led by editors Cockburn and St Clair. Call Becky Grant now at 1-800-840-3683 to order your copies, or go online at www.counterpunch.org and place your ordere that way. And while you're at it, order our hot new collecdtion, Serpents in the Garden, Liasons with Culture and Sex--the best of CounterPunch, on music, art, architecture and sex. With Dime's Worth in one hand and Serpents in the other, you can march towards November with a clear mind and all the right ammo for the fall campaign.

Assassinating Teens

by Scott Handleman

Tulkarm, West Bank

On Sunday evening, a vanload of Israeli undercover police zoomed into the Palestinian city of Tulkarm, jumped out of their van and murdered six youths at close range.

Two days later, the city is still in mourning. Most of the stores are closed. At midday, a long line of men, families of the dead, assembled to receive visitors.

I spoke with Rami Shantir, a balding man in his early 30s, at the mourning reception. The Israelis shot his cousin Muhammad in the head.

Muhammad Adnan Mahmoud Shantir was 18 years old and had just graduated from high school. The previous weekend he had had a graduation party. He got good grades in school and was pursuing plans to enter the university. Shantir had two older brothers and five sisters. His mother is a widow. His father, a shopkeeper, was murdered by thieves in 1999.

He was on the way back from the mosque when he saw two friends in the street, having a bite to eat. They exchanged greetings. Shantir's friends were members of the Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigades and had been marked for assassination by the Israelis. Shantir had just taken leave of his friends when the van of assassins pulled up. They shot him in the head as he was walking away.

Of the six killed, three were 18, two were in their mid-twenties, and one, an unarmed Palestinian security officer, was 34. Three were wounded, including an elderly man who was shot in the legs. Eyewitness international observers report that soldiers arrived on the scene after the assassins, and prevented Palestinian ambulances from reaching the dying.

The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz took its line from "military sources." It claimed that the six were members of the Al-Aqsa brigade, and were "on their way to carry out a terror attack near Tul Karm." Local tv reported the same story: six militants killed. Locals deny this. It appears that two of the victims were targeted members of the brigades, two were innocent passers-by, and the status of two others is unclear. Rami Shantir pointed to Muhammad's high marks of 80.4 in economics as evidence that he had life plans beyond martyrdom. Otherwise, why take the trouble to earn good grades?

The walls of Tulkarm are already postered with photos of the newest martyrs. Muhammad's poster bears the stamp of the Al-Aqsa Brigade. He looks every bit the well-groomed economics student, incongruously brandishing a semiautomatic rifle. Semiautomatics are a favorite prop in the photo studios. West Bank streets are plastered with "martyr's' posters," issued in remembrance of suicide bombers or victims of Israeli terror. Most hold weapons.

International law prohibits the extrajudicial killing of civilians. Even those who support guerilla activity or terror operations must be arrested and tried. To date, Israel's High Court has refused to issue an injunction against the government's policy of extrajudicial assassination.

What Moore Left Out

By Frank Bardacke

I can't claim to have read everything, and I couldn't bear to punch it in and hit search, but when I finally saw Fahrenheit 9/11, one enormous omission jumped out that no one I know of has commented on, and which might be worth a few paragraphs of a Counterpuncher s time: where is the anti-war movement?

Remember: before the US invasion of Iraq, we all marched in several enormous demonstrations, the last of which was the largest, world-wide co-ordinated protest in the history of humanity. And then, as the war began, thousands of protesting people were arrested across the United States. Well, there is nothing about any of that in the movie. Not an image, not a word.

Mr. Moore has made an anti-war movie which neglects to mention what was a hugely popular anti-war movement. And add to that curiosity that Moore could easily have used the world-wide protest of millions of people as yet another way of ridiculing George Bush. Again remember: Bush told the press that he ignored the demonstrations because I never pay attention to focus groups. Moore, a master of filmatic juxtaposition, could have done wonders with that.

Why does it matter? Because the absence of the anti-war movement is another way that Moore leaves us with nothing to do but, as the maimed soldier in the movie puts it, go home and work for the Democrats. If he had included some images of protest, we would have been offered another option: resume our independent action against the war.

But Moore is not interested in that. He is only interested in helping the Democrats defeat Bush. And although his movie effectively tells millions of people about some of the horrors of the war, it simultaneously disarms them, as defeating Bush will have little effect on the war in Iraq, unless we rebuild an independent anti-war movement.

And isn't that a main problem with all this election nonsense? Instead of protesting against the war, people are busy working out their various election strategies. But who you vote for has always been less important than what you work for. And voting for Kerry or Nader or whomever is much less important than (perhaps even a distraction from) what we used to call our main task: returning to the streets, in massive numbers, against this god-damn war. CP

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Richard Ben Cramer's "How Israel Lost"

By Heather Williams

With demolitions and assassinations by the Israeli Defense Forces continuing apace, bombs from Gaza and the West Bank killing Israeli preschoolers and civilians riding buses, neocon solutions for a McDonald's-friendly Middle East going south next door in Iraq, and al Qaeda forces winning hearts and minds from Berlin to Bangkok, it would appear to be a time when the gatekeepers of critical opinion in the mainstream book world might give some credit for bold reportage on Israel and Palestine. In particular, that credit might not be so difficult to hand out when the author is Richard Ben Cramer. Best known as the biographer of Joe DiMaggio and the author of *What It Takes*, a pop-psych romp through the1988 elections, Cramer returns in his latest book to his longtime beat in Israel, which he began covering for the Philadelphia Inquirer in the late 1970s.

The official response to *How Israel Lost: The Four Questions* (Simon and Schuster. $24.00) confirms that straying from the official script on Israel in any kind of big picture fashion is still the sort of thing that can screw up a celebrated career in no time at all. Snippy reviews by self-declared centrists in the Boston Globe, Washington Post, the New York Times, as well as shrill diatribes from the right in the National Review and the Jerusalem Post all scream that Cramer should have stuck to baseball if he wanted any more Pulitzer prizes. Given the blackout of serious high-level debate about Israel's activities in the occupied territories and the viability of any sort of independent Palestinian state, such prompt, blanket dismissal of a new book on Israel virtually comes as a recommendation.

Cramer's device in his book is answering four modified Passover questions: Why do we care about Israel? Why don't the Palestinians have a state? What is a Jewish state? Why is there no peace? Predictably, each critic in turn ignores Cramer's answers to those questions, but provide readers with four preemptory answers as to why they ought not to bother with Cramer's book. The likes of Jonathan Dorfman, Barbara Slavin, Jonathan Rosen, and Tom Gross ignore the best of what is Cramer's book and stick to the standard four lines that will steer most casual readers elsewhere: Cramer is naïve and arrogant; Cramer gets the facts wrong; Cramer is a self-hating Jew who only claims to love Israel; Cramer has nothing new to say.

What the response really suggests is that it may be one thing for journalists to report discrete violent facts in Israel and the occupied territories, but it is quite another to call attention to a pattern of state actions, or much less to point out that violence against civilians is official policy happily sanctioned by the courts. Thus, the current state of casual knowledge: readers see a picture of a gerrymandered security wall cutting off starving populations from their olive groves, a portrait of a suicide bomber, a sprinkling of Red Cross statistics on appalling rates of malnutrition among Palestinian children, or a fifth paragraph of a story on a deadly bombing in Tel Aviv that mentions *oh-and-by-the-way* IDF troops promptly killed twice that many Palestinians (armed and unarmed) in response. But no one offers any no strong conclusions as to what these horrors add up to. What makes *How Israel Lost* genuinely worthwhile has less to do with new conclusions about the state of conflict in the occupied territories or even groundbreaking interviews with major players on either side than it does with building big, counterintuitive arguments through miniature models—stories of lives made and ruined, villages built and razed, corrupt fiefdoms erected and consolidated, projects of peacemaking conceived and abandoned. Despite the richness of twenty-five years of interviews and stories from the field, Cramer had a lot of practical and probably financial reasons not to put them together in a book so critical of Israel and the PLO. He should be congratulated for doing so.

Writing fairly about the Palestinians means (even if you are Jewish) being called an enemy of the Jews

There are two well-worn arguments that Cramer's book undoes very nicely. The first—the standard for right-wingers whose reading doesn't veer that far from this week's People Magazine— is that electoral democracy automatically makes Israel more worthy than its neighbors of U.S. support and also automatically makes it a better-faith bargaining partner. The second—the standard for liberals and self-declared centrists who see themselves as anguished friends of Israel— is that Sharon's break with Clinton-era peacemaking is the problem and that a return to an Oslo-like agreement is the solution.

As for the claim that Israel and its supporters claim that Israel deserves favor because it is a democracy and it neighbors are not (a favorite line of ex-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu), Cramer suggests problematically that it is precisely Israel's representative institutions combined with changing demography that have made durable peace unlikely. Cramer discusses at length the rise of the Knesset's right wing coalition-from-hell, attributing it to a combination traditional right-wing militancy, the pragmatism of Russian émigré settlers (many of them non-Jews who, of course, were brought to Israel in order to populate the occupied territory and create more "facts on the ground"), and tactical intransigence on the part of the ultra-orthodox (many of whom, despite their part in expansionist military policies, hold their ground and compel other sectors rightward by condemning the idea of a Zionist state). Cramer further excoriates the record of an Israeli Supreme Court that refuses to issue injunctions against demolitions, security checkpoints, enclosures, land expropriations, or even torture and assassinations that end the lives of dozens of innocents along with their targets. Given Ashcroft's Justice Department memos to the White House on torture that would air the month his book appeared on the shelves, Cramer's analysis of Israel's impact on its patron is quite prescient:

Maybe it's also true, the old Bible

(**Williams** *continued on page 6*)

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(**Blackburn** *continued from page 1*)

presidential hopefuls are subjected it is surprising that a substantial clue to Kerry's thinking has been largely neglected, namely his 1997 book, *The New War: the Web of Crime that Threatens America's Security*. This was a contentious engagement with serious issues, not the usual pabulum of a candidate. The senator warned that the United States had yet to wake up to the real threats of a post-Cold War world, namely drug traffickers, money launderers, terrorist networks and rogue states. He urged that existing judicial structures were hopelessly inappropriate to the task of combating these enemies.

The bombs at the World Trade Center and at Darhran in Saudi Arabia, and a host of attacks on Americans abroad, showed the need for a quite different approach: 'We now need to consider experimenting with our closest partners in a system that sets up special courts to try cases at home involving victims abroad.' (*The New War* p. 182). He was careful to insist that he was not advocating a new UN structure, or seeking to beef up Interpol: 'In truth the idea of a team of global super-cops is not just unworkable. It is a genuinely bad idea. This leaves only one reasonable alternative: that nations expand their national legal jurisdiction to create a much broader ability to investigate and prosecute cases involving their citizens when the injuries take place beyond their borders. The United States has already moved to some extra-territorial jurisdiction over crimes when they involve terrorism.' (p. 188).

In Kerry's view international courts would be too cumbersome and compromised to take the necessary measures. While multilateral efforts should be made to secure as much support as possible the needed measures would also require bilateral action, taken with close partners, and sometimes the United States would have to act alone: 'In dealing with states that are outright criminal, the United States may, at times, need to take unilateral action to protect its citizens, its interests, its integrity. This need not take as dramatic a form as our invasion of Panama and arrest of Noriega, though it would be unwise to rule out that option a priori. It does mean that we can and should punish countries that wilfully refuse to protect our citizens and in effect become state sponsors of criminality, as we now are doing with Myanmar and Nigeria.' (p. 182).

Neither camp has seen advantage in acknowledging that Kerry anticipated some elements of the Bush doctrine. In this pre-9/11 epoch Kerry was not advocating the full neo-conservative program, complete with Guantanamo, proconsuls in Bagdad and memos on the necessity for torture. But what with calls for unilateral action against 'criminal states', and the need for the US to proclaim 'extra-territorial jurisdiction', he was certainly setting out the imperial agenda for a 'war on terror'. Indeed the central concept of *the new war* which gives the book its title already implies emergency conditions, special measures and fights to the death, concepts which become very dangerous as recipes for the conduct of foreign relations for any power, let alone the world's most powerful.

Kerry obviously hopes to capitalise on every setback for Bush and to gain the votes of those against the war. But at the same time, as Jonathan Steele, a senior journalist on the *Guardian*, has pointed out, in 'speech after speech' Kerry lays the groundwork for 'expanding and prolonging the US presence in Iraq'. (Jonathan Steele. 'Kerry Would Keep US Troops in Iraq Far Longer than Bush', *Guardian* July 9). For example, in a speech at Fulton, Missouri, on April 30 Kerry declared 'If our commanders believe that they need more American troops they should say so and they should get them….But more and more American soldiers cannot be the only solution…The coalition should organise expanded international security forces, preferably with NATO, but under US command.' Kerry advanced the strange claim that a continued occupation would prevent – rather than aggravate – problems arising from Iraq for other NATO members: 'For the Europeans failure in Iraq could endanger the security of their oil supplies, further radicalise their large Muslim populations, threaten destabilising refugee flows and seed a large new source of terrorism.'

In a *Washington Post* article Kerry called for a 'realistic plan to win the peace and bring the troops home' but insisted: 'Our goal should be an alliance commitment to deploy a major portion of the peace-keeping force that will be needed in Iraq for a long time to come.' Kerry, who has uttered no word of criticism of the Israeli government, also spoke of NATO forces playing a role not only in Iraq but in 'the region.'

Steele is a very experienced analyst who has spent time on the ground in Washington and Iraq. His evaluation of Kerry carries much weight. But when he suggests that Bush has found the going so hard in Iraq that he will 'declare victory and withdraw', he is surely mistaken. Even many in US ruling circles who opposed the war believe that it would be dangerous folly to countenance withdrawal. For the United States the strategic imperative of not being seen to fail, and of retaining control of a vital resource and region, carry preponderant force.

Even so, might not Kerry eventually realise that, whoever controls Iraq, the fate of Iraqi oil will be determined by the world market, and that withdrawal offers the best hope of shoring up US interests elsewhere in the region? Whatever he says now, won't a Democrat President be a little more likely to heed the groundswell than a Republican?

Over the last thirty years the presidencies of Republicans have been more bloody than those of Democrats. The Reagan-Bush years witnessed death squads in central and south America, killing several hundreds of thousands of people with the active connivance of US security forces and ambassadors – the latter notably including John Negroponte, the US proconsul in Iraq today. These years also witnessed US support for Saddam in a war with Iran that cost a million lives. In the UN Pol Pot was accorded recognition. A covert alliance with the South African apartheid regime saw pitiless wars against the governments in Angola and Mozambique, in which at least half a million perished.

The presidencies of Carter and Clinton did not sponsor murder squads on this scale but they were marked by their own harvest of suffering. It was as Carter's NSC director that Brzezinski initiated the turn to Muslim fundamentalists in Afghanistan, fuelling a war that claimed millions of victims. Clinton did nothing about the genocide in Rwanda

The Nader-Camejo campaign is staid and unadventurous. Since they have nothing to lose, they could abandon the go softly approach and embrace every radical and progressive cause they can think of.

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and had co-responsibility with the first Bush, and the Europeans, in the unfolding war in Yugoslavia. When Clinton did act on Bosnia and Kosovo he countenanced further ethnic cleansing and helped to sponsor miserable NATO protectorates which still lack credibility. In Iraq Clinton maintained a regime of sanctions which caused the death of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children.

Grimly determined proponents of the 'lesser evil' might still see the crimes of the Democratic presidents as less purely malevolent. Sins of commission are somehow less heinous than sins of commission, even if the loss of life is comparable. However disastrous US policy towards former Yugoslav might have been, Susan Woodward rightly insists that European responsibility was as great, if not greater. Many of those who opposed both the Gulf War and the Saddam regime also called for sanctions – though, admittedly, not for heavy bombing.

Those unable to stomach the 'lesser evil' can support Nader, or abstain if they live in one of the many states where he isn't on the ballot. Some US polls currently show Nader holding the balance as he did in 2000. The Democrats would probably have prevented this by adopting Howard Dean or Bob Graham. If Nader's votes once again allow Bush to win, they might be bolder next time - and they might support legislation in each state that allowed the Alternative Vote method, so that electors could express two preferences, with the second being counted if their first didn't come in the top two.

A re-elected Bush will be deterred from more wars of pre-emption, because the whole strategy has proved so costly. Nevertheless these are not easy judgements to call and I can sympathise with those who have to make them, as mere subjects of the empire do not.

There is a good case for evaluating US presidential candidates mainly on their foreign policy stance, since here they have great power. Presidents count for less in the domestic arena, though with his tax cut, judicial appointments and Patriot Act Bush has often managed to get his way, in the latter case by exploiting the sense of emergency. If the Democrats were united things would be different, since they have, and will retain, enough senators to kill off legislation they are really opposed to, but there have always been Democrats willing to support Bush.

In *The New War* Kerry attacked the use of tax havens by corporations evading taxes as well as by terrorist networks and drug cartels. Candidate Kerry has taken a different tack, proposing a reduction in tax for companies that are prepared to repatriate profits they have kept off shore. There may be some tactical justification for this move, if it was part of a general campaign to get companies to pay their taxes. But it isn't.

Howard Dean pointed out that US corporation tax used to raise over 4 per cent of GDP in the 1960s and that it now raises only 2.5 per cent. Kerry, who has been garnering money on Wall St, says nothing about this, or indeed about the extraordinary string of financial scandals which led one Republican senator to describe the US savings industry as 'the world's largest skimming organisation'. The scandals were exposed by a Democrat, Eliot Spitzer, the New York attorney general, but Kerry did not consider him as a running mate or seek his advice.

Howell Raines, the former managing editor of the *New York Times*, believes that Kerry is doomed because he won't set a date for disengagement from Iraq or come up with at least one bold, new proposal to improve the lot of the ordinary American – for example, Raines suggests, a dramatic contribution to retirement security - a 'Winnebago in every drive way' replacing a 'chicken in every pot'. ('Must Do Better', *Guardian*, June 2).

Those who believe that the Democratic contender offers no choice have a strong case but Ralph Nader and his running mate, Peter Camejo, could do more to make it clear that they offer something completely different. As an Arab American Nader should have been able to project more sharply his concerns about the Palestinians – if he visited Palestine and the occupied territories it would certainly rivet media attention. And as a scourge of corporate malpractice, he and Camejo – who is an ethical asset manager – could also do more to target the misdeeds of the banks and money managers.

They could come forward with a plan to restore the employers' contribution to health and retirement programs by requiring companies to finance a network of state trust funds dedicated to this purpose. This could be paid for by requiring every public corporation to donate new shares every year, equivalent to 10 per cent of annual profits, to the network of trust funds. (If Nader and Camejo want to know how this can be done they should consult the conclusion to my recent book Banking on Death (Verso), where I explain how such a share levy could help to meet the burgeoning costs of the aging and learning society.)

Assessing the Nader campaign from afar is obviously unfair. But from what one can glean on the web the Nader-Camejo campaign is staid and unadventurous. Since they really have nothing to lose, Nader and Camejo could abandon the softly-softly approach and embrace every radical and progressive cause they can think of – the outlawing of factory farming, $30,000 for every American reaching the age of 18, an end to the laws against drug use, an amnesty for all convicted of drug offences, an end to the death penalty, a contiguous Palestinian state with half the land and a port in the north, evacuation of all US bases, not only those in Iraq, and so on - I've left out several good causes I know the candidates already support.

A campaign like this would gain more attention, attract those who don't usually vote, and have a less predictable impact on the Bush/Kerry contest. It might even stimulate the sort of critical opinion and radical movement which would be a constraint on the next president, whoever he may be. CP

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(**Williams** *continued from page 3)*
prophecy—'Israel will be a light unto the nations'—in this case, a lurid mercury vapor security light. Our CIA confers with the Israeli's on how to pull off proper assassinations. Our Homeland Security toughs study at the Shin Bet's knee. Now, as the *Jewish Daily Forward* reports, the Bush administration is sending legal experts to consult with the Israelis—on how to justify the killings.

With regard to the fruits of democracy, Cramer, though not enamored of many contemporary prime ministers, is unsparing in his contempt for Ariel Sharon, whom he followed as a reporter from his murderous days as head of the southern command in the early 1970s through his brief discrediting for the massacre of refugees in Lebanon to his eventual rise to high office. Cramer prominently quotes a contemporary of Sharon's (and a hawk no less), who deems Sharon a "liar, cheater, swindler, killer, and coward." Cramer himself calls Sharon a "one-trick pony who has no clue what to do now—save to do what he has always done…He's a man who is never so at ease—so much in control—as when something big has just blown up, and Israel, after its time-honored method, is about to wreak a terrible retribution. At last something he knows how to do!"

Cramer's second argument is probably what puts him in the bull's eye of mainstream critics. Warren Bass in the Washington Post, for example, takes special pains to scold Cramer for failing to provide grist for the merry middle. Disobligingly, Cramer declines to offer the comforting counterfactual conclusion that alas, peace might have been possible if Rabin hadn't been assassinated or if Barak hadn't lost, or perhaps if the Palestinian leadership had put an end to that second *intifada*. Cramer instead condemns Oslo as a waste of time, a set of principles that were no more than "just an invitation to more years of haggling—if (Arafat) minded his p's and q's." Despite the crackerjack tone of his writing, Cramer's point is somewhat subtle: it is not, he argues, a question of managing an occupation more or less humanely. Occupation itself has inescapable logic. The tutelary authority set up under the accords, whether meant to resemble a state or not, created interests on both sides in maintaining blockades, scarcity, and violence. With Oslo, "Israel got everything she wanted," Cramer writes. He continues:

"She got complete control of security…control of the borders, the water, the air…the continuation in force of Israeli military regulations—i.e. the legal framework of the occupation…a huge new land grab—thirty-five thousand acres for new settlers' 'bypass roads'—which would remain under IDF control…another grand new land grab, with agreement to consider the Israeli settlement in 'blocs'—which meant all the land between them was suddenly 'legal,' too…the division of the rest of the West Bank into smaller areas (two hundred twenty-seven separate 'enclaves' by Amnesty International's count)—with access in and out controlled by Israelis…the division of Gaza into three tiny ghettos…Israeli control of people and projects exiting the West Bank and Gaza Strip—the Palestinians cannot export without Israeli approval…Israeli control of all imports into the West Bank and Gaza Strip. ..In other words the territories (and the Arabs in them) became the perfect and legal embodiment of a captive market. Israel collects all taxes and fees—which she then remits to the PA—so Israel is also Arafat's paymaster."

Perhaps the strongest part of the book focuses on how Oslo actually worked on the ground. A blockaded economy, of course, makes government the only industry, leaving the Palestinian Authority as run by Arafat and his fellow former exiles in Tunisia to distribute aid personally in classic patron-client fashion. Connected Palestinians in turn make deals with connected Israelis on everything from petrol to casinos. They then charge impoverished Palestinians thirty percent more for basic goods services they can't afford anyway, and then make it even more necessary for people to trade their political loyalty for handouts. Meanwhile, Hamas opponents of Arafat's Fatah party gain support as relatively less corrupt sources of basic aid in the occupied territories.

Though it may be remembered best for the gum-smacking, tabloid tone, *How Israel Lost* is a serious and worthwhile book. As for the critics' four conclusions arrayed him—arrogance, incomplete facts, anti-Semitism, and lack of new material— if true, let them serve as a medals of commendation. The other side of each is what makes this effort unusual and good and engaging. After all, courage takes some considerable bravado; writing a book with clear arguments means deciding what most needs reporting; writing fairly and humanely about the Palestinians means (even if you are Jewish) being called an enemy of the Jews. And finally, even if Cramer echoes what others have said for some time, he does so on the basis of what he has learned first hand in thirty years of work in the Middle East. CP

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